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Re-envisioning DCAD for the Future

Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability (DCAD)

Internet Governance Forum - October 9th, 2023

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Good morning. Good afternoon. Good evening to everyone who has come here for our session on the Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability. Thank you so much for joining us online and in person. We greatly appreciate it. So we welcome you all here for the session, DCAD re-envisioning for the future. I can run through the agenda with you. The agenda is, we are going to talk about -- we're going to talk about what the agenda is. First, we will introduce, we have a whole series. We recently in the past year, we revitalized DCAD. We created a series of governance documents, a code of conduct. We did a series of other things here to revamp the service. Then we also have, for the first time in person, three disability fellows that were funded through the generosity of Vint Cerf, for the fellow ship programme. We have Vidhya Reddy. She represents India. She'll be speaking.

We also have Nicodemus from Kenya. Then we have professor Inoue from Japan, as well as Lidia Best, representing the hard of hearing community in Europe. So we're having an exciting list of speakers here. We also have a mentor here of disability fellows, so we

thank you all for coming. I will then pass it on to Lidia? To our colleague, Dr. Shabbir, who is my co-head on the dynamic coalition on accessibility and disability.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Thank you, Judith. Thank you, very much. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for joining us. Good afternoon to everyone present here and good morning and greeting of the day or evening wherever you are in your time zones.

Thank you very much for joining the dynamic coalition on accessibility and disability sessions featuring re-envisioning the future. Dynamic coalition on accessibility and disability is an advocate of accessibility of Internet governance forums. It is visibility of persons with disabilities in the forums, as well as the accessibility of the forums for people with disabilities.

With this, the dynamic coalition on accessibility and disability with the generous support of Vint Cerf and Google have been able to bring a number of persons with disabilities in person to this session. We actually had support programme for online or reward participation, as well, but as so it happened, the support applications we received were mostly related to in-person participation. So nothing about us without us is only possible if person with disabilities themselves, as I often say, come forward and contribute into the discussions. I am really grateful, and I thank to our wonderful fellows from India, from Kenya, from Europe, to Vidhya, Lidia, Nicodemus, Professor Inoue for being with us.

This is a remarkable moment in DCAD's history, as we have been struggling for a COVID period. A number of organizations, this is a sort of revival of the DCAD of going into sort of hibernation for a year or so. That's why I really am glad that we are able to bring that forum into the living people's life, and contribute to where it should be contributing. To make the internet governance forums accessible for people with disabilities.

I believe after the welcome and introduction, the first thing that we had on our agenda was to talk about the accessibility of the IGF Forum. As has been the tradition, that we always try to, sort of, map the accessibility of idea forums.   So I would really want here any of my colleagues sitting on this table or in the hall or online, if you want to share your experiences with regards to accessibility of IGF, if you've faced any issues or problems, you have the forum now. You can ask for the forum. The mic will come to you, or, online, you can raise your hand, and Deirdre, my co-moderator will tell us if there are comments from online.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Judith Hellerstein. We're also happy to announce that the main session of the -- of all the dynamic coalitions will be held on Friday. We also have international sign language on that session. We found out too late that the main sessions, most of the main sessions will not have international sign language, that sign language was only available for the high-level sessions and for the opening /closing ceremonies. We made it a point that we needed it for the dynamic session -- coordination main session. We were happy the Secretariat was able to arrange for that, as well. Look forward to seeing that.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Are there any comments on accessibility?

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Dr. Shabbir asked if there are comments on the accessibility of the IGF.

PETER CROSBIE: Peter Crosbie here. These are comments we've been making every year, as we all have, in regards to the IGF. I'm someone with a cognitive disability, so, basically, I'm looking for information online that's clear, easy to access, and so on. Easy log-in, all of that. Once again, the IGF site, it just fails on all those criteria. I do not believe for one session that the IGF site itself, yet alone the aspects of it devoted to the forum, meet WCAG guidelines. I don't believe there's any proper order being done. I don't believe it has any input or meaningful input from people with disabilities.   As with every year, I feel that many people are being excluded because it's much, much too complicated and, basically, on some levels, doesn't work. I can go into some of the specifics at some other point in anyone wants, but that's just my experience of it. Thank you.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Yes, thank you very much, Peter. This is really valuable. I really appreciate this. The comment about following the web content accessibility guidelines for the development of the web sites and apps is really a necessity. If this organization, the organization that we are sitting, the conference we are sitting for, speaking at, the Internet Governance Forum doesn't follow it, who else then we can expect that they would follow?

This is really a very crucial comment. Thank you so much for raising it up.

Lidia, do you have something to say?

LIDIA BEST: Could someone get an mic to Vidhya?

Vidhya, could you stand?

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Lidia.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Vidhya raised her hand.

VIDHYA REDDY: Yes, firstly, I needed help with the registration. I don't remember exactly where, but I needed some help by registering. Also, I'm a person with visual impairment, and I'm from India. One main issue I'm having is with the scheduling of the events, the personal schedule. Also, there's the schedule on the IGF website which has an Excel file. If I use my screen reader, I might miss out on some data. Each time, I have to ask my brother who is here, what is the next session, or I have to open my web site. Getting there with the screen reader is a little bit difficult.

Something I've seen on other conferences for persons with disability is you have the schedule in alternative formats, like braille, so at least people who know how to use braille can get to the session easily. You know what page number it is, and if you put your hand there, you can read it and figure it out.   That is a quicker way of doing it than asking it to everybody.   And one more session is now because I'm with my brother. I don't have navigational issues because he is able to see, but if I would have come here by myself, I'm not really sure how difficult it would be. Again, I've seen in some conferences where there's a braille map or some tactile. The building is made accessible, at least through the tactile. So when you walk, you just figure out the way. So easily available help where you can ask where to go easily.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Thank you so much for that. One comment you had, I was wondering, and maybe others can tell us, the IGF also has an interactive schedule now, and whether that schedule is easier to read for persons with disabilities.   Shabbir says he'll come to that, so we'll give the floor now to Lidia Best.

LIDIA BEST: Thank you. Lidia speaking.

I'm looking on the perspective of people who are hard of hearing and in general before we go to any events, we really would like to know how we will be able to follow.   For me, looking at the IGF website, the official website and the organizer's website, I'm always looking for accessibility. There is not an easy way to find an accessibility information and to find out, for example, if all of the sessions will be captioned, if all of the sessions will have a sign language interpretation, and what about the access to us who need it? That kind of information is vital to us, who want to travel all the way. Otherwise, we don't know what to expect. That's something that can be quite easily, you know, resolved and achieved. Provide us the information of what you have prepared. Thank you.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Thanks so much for that. We will make sure that we put these in. Just for clarity sake, we do need another line item on the bottom, but all the sessions are

captioned. In fact, it is not easy to find, there are transcript links for every session, but it is not very easy to find. We're going to ask them to make sure that these are more accessible. There should be an accessibility statement listed in the accessibility of each session. We could add that as a comment to it.

LIDIA BEST: My comment is for the on-site participation. We know online. We have that information because we can see whether there's captioning or sign language for whatever sessions. But we don't know what is happening on-site.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Right. I think that would be also, should be also in the accessibility statement on the website.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Yes, I totally agree with Lidia there. We do know that the sessions will be captioned. The high-level session would have the sign language, International Signs, but all in regards to on-site accessibility, there are a number of questions. This brings me to my point that I wanted to highlight here.

There are a number of facilities and information.

There is a lot of information for on-site participants. One of that is about the different events and programmes that are happening. Vidhya talked about, and Judith raised a question about, the interactive agenda and programme. For me, I consider myself a moderate computer user who is a little bit well versed in the technology, so I can navigate it. But for a user who was a basic level user of the accessible technology, this interactive programme would be a difficult one to navigate.   Secondly, with regards to physical accessibility of the event, we just had, before this session, about an hour before this session, we had lunch. Thankfully provided by the local host. This lunch has information on the website, that what would be served every day and where it would be served.   Very nice. Thank you so much for that. I really appreciate that. But what and where the programme was lacking was the information about the menus. What choices would be there every day? Vegetarian, Muslim food?

The menus were there. They were supposed to be there, but the problem with the screen reader was that it would tell you an image, an image of a picture. Well, that's no information. If you want to go about making your events accessible, you have to give every information in an accessible format. That brings us to the point which was highlighted by Peter, that you need to follow the web content accessibility guidelines while developing these websites. This information was put on the website. Had there been a proper audit of the website and the pages, I'm sure this information would have come up.

We had tried to raise this issue at a number of earlier events, as well. Before I move forward, may I ask Deirdre, the online moderator, do we have any hands raised or questions in the online space?

DEIRDRE WILLIAMS: I haven't seen anything yet.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Is there anyone in the remote space who would want to say or contribute to this discussion that we are having here?

DEIRDRE WILLIAMS: I think we are all listening carefully.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Thank you so much for that.

This brings me to the next question, and that I would

want to ask my local friends here. We have two persons with

disabilities from Japan in this room. Professor Inoue and

Ms. Tanata. Am I pronouncing it right? We have Professor Inoue

and Ms. Tanata with us in the room. Let's listen to Professor Inoue

first, who will be talking to us with the help of the

interpreter. Let's listen to him, what are his impression of

the Internet Governance Forum, and what he thinks is the

accessibility all about.

>> Our interpreter has a microphone, thank you.

MASAYUKI INOUE: I'm Masayuki Inoue. I'm deaf, so I'm using sign language here. The sign language interpreter is voicing for my signing. First, let me briefly introduce myself.   I am a professor at a national university which is established for deaf and hard of hearing students.

From a deaf perspective, I have been engaged in many issues related with information access. There is the federation, federation of the deaf, and I have been serving as an expert member on technology and accessibility more than ten years.

Among the speakers here, it seems I'm the only deaf person. So speaking from a deaf perspective, I'd like to say, it is important that deaf people can exchange information, not

only writing, but also in sign language. So, also, it is not perfect yet. The speak-to-text technology has been very much advanced. However, as for the speech-to-sign language or sign language-to-speech technology, it is far from usable level.   It's still going to take time to reach there.

Therefore, in order to ensure equal access to Internet communication for deaf people, we continue to need human resources, such as sign language interpreters and captioners. So that's what I think, you know, we need more, to continue to use human resources for that.

Now, we have an issue. How to build a course.

That's something we need to consider. Now, with the advancement of the technology, you know, if we put our minds to, we can do almost anything. The question is whether we can really realize it. In Japan, various moves have been enacted for People with Disabilities, such as no discrimination law and domestic standards for accessibility.

Well, yeah, well-established now. For example, in the case of the World Wide Web, in order to develop a website, in order to ensure the equal access of persons with disabilities, especially for the visual impairment, deaf and hard of hearing people, the necessary consideration are summarized in guideline. However, these national standards are not mandatory in Japan, and there is no penalty for failure to comply to. That is why we still find many public websites not accessible for Persons with Disabilities. That's the reality. One example is telephone relay service. It started in Japan. But it is based on the law which clearly defines the responsibility of the state. And who is responsible for the cost, as well. So it is very important to have this kind of law, that it's the responsibility of the states to ensure the access of Internet for all people.

So in order to realize the equal access for all persons with disabilities, we have to -- it is important that it is not Persons with Disabilities to adapt and make efforts.   It's the state's and the society to take responsibility for developing a mechanism to realize for participation on PWDs.

Sorry. I'm kind of nervous, not sure if I can explain well, but that's my thought. Thank you.

(Applause).

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Thank you. Thank you very much, Professor. This is really enlightening. The two key messages that I would take from this speech, though I won't call it a nervous speech. That was a very well articulated. One is that we need to do the costing. When it comes to accessibility, there cannot be any marriage of accessibility. Cost should not be in my perspective. You cannot compare it. It should be a main factor, as

well, and a real one. To me, it should not be a factor when it comes to making an event accessible for People with Disabilities.

Second, and main thing, the one key lesson, if the people in this hall and the system that we are contributing to, the IGF system, were to take one lesson from this speech, that would be that it should not be Persons with Disabilities adopting to the system. It should be the system making it comfortable and accessible itself for people with disabilities.   That is called the social approach, the approach of UN CRPD itself. It is the idea very well articulated by the professor, but the team, it was already engrained, and we wouldn't be doing something new if we were to adopt this approach.

Before I move forward on the agenda, are there comments or questions from the hall or online participants?

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Deirdre, one minute. I wanted to add something.

As the professor said, it's up to the states. One of the other things I think he also did not mention is that many of these laws were based on a pre-digital society. They need to be brought up to date. So the telephone relay is based on an all system, when we only had voice. They need to be brought up to date. The same way, just like emergency responses were based on an old system and need to be brought up to date. They need to have video for people who could sign in the video and talk into the emergency response person.

They need to have the ability to have all these type of ways to do it. In the U.S., there was a law about this.   They also -- in addition to what he said about the funding for the telephone relay, they also have an additional tax that's put on all the phones to pay, to make sure that video is also working. So that when people who cannot, who cannot hear, can use sign language and they can speak, and it'd work well. It's important now to make sure that the laws are brought up to the digital arena, where video and others are needed, the same thing.

The issue, also, is, as you were saying, pictures. It's an issue mostly of awareness. Society has not understood, they don't -- that when you have a picture, you can't see it.   You have to keep explaining to them, "Oh, it just says picture.   If you want people to see it, we need to explain what's in the picture. Just like when you post on Facebook, you say, it's a picture of," describing what's in there.

We found that when you explain to people -- we shouldn't have to be doing that -- but when we are doing explanations, people say, "Oh, thank you so much. I hadn't realized this. I hadn't known this."

So we have to -- there's a lot of work being done. We have to keep doing it, making people aware of what are the issues, so that they know and they can address them. Because many people want to address them, they're just not aware this has happened because they're used to posting and photos and that type of thing, that they don't understand that this has to be done.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Judith, I would -- well, I have a comment, and I'd respond to this. We are talking about -- so the professor was too polite not to say that, in terms of accessibility, we still are living in dark ages. On the second point, for individuals, this could be justified that they would not know something about accessibility. But institutions cannot hide behind the fact that they did not know. They are actually there, it is their responsibility to know of accessibility requirements and fulfill them.

So, for instance, IGF cannot be -- cannot get away with the statement that they did not know. If IGF doesn't know about accessibility standards, so, well, it would be -- I would not say anything more about that. Institutions cannot be forgiveness. Full stop.

Any online comments, Deirdre?

DEIRDRE WILLIAMS: Yes, there are.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Please tell us what they are.

DEIRDRE WILLIAMS: Muhammad Akram from -- I'm so sorry, I do not remember the acronym for your organization [APFHD]. He wanted to say, "it is true that voice to text is much advanced, but it is yet not 100% accurate, so we need human resources for human captioning, especially in local languages."

And, thank you, he tells me he's from Pakistan.

That's his comment. And he is an expert on relay services.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Yes. We have him as a speaker. Thank you, Akram, for coming online. I'll give you the mic in a while.

Are there any other comments online, Deirdre?

DEIRDRE WILLIAMS: Not at the moment. Thank you.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Any person who wanted to take mic?

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: We did have a comment here from Muhammad Akram. He wanted it written out into the record. He says, "Just a comment. It is true that voice-to-text is much advanced."

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: That's what --

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Oh, okay. Sorry.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Any other person from the online space who may want to take mic and say something?

DEIRDRE WILLIAMS: No one has asked yet.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Anyone from this hall? Any questions or comments that the discussion that we just had?

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Nicodemus.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Yes, Nicodemus, please.

NICODEMUS NYAKUNDI: Yes, I'm Nicodemus Nyakundi. I'm from Kenya. I'd love to comment on the professor's input on laws that guide accessibility.

In Kenya, we did an assessment on government websites, Persons with Disabilities. One of the revelations we came through the focus group discussions was that, yes, like in Kenya, we have our standards on website accessibilities, but they're not being followed. So we realize that the key issue is there is no watchdog. There is nobody standing to implement these laws and ensure that the websites are accessible.   Another thing is that there's lack of awareness, both in the public and even the web developers. If there is a web developer in here, they'll test that. When developing the web, you'd be asked for accessibility features. Most of them then tend to ignore these features, because maybe they're rushing all the time or maybe they're not aware that it is a very necessary, key thing in web accessibility.

Another issue was involvement with persons of disabilities. You realize that they make laws, make policies, but they don't consider the input or believe the experience of persons with disabilities. Thank you so much.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Yes, thank you very much, Nicodemus, for this comment.

Now, I would want to move on to our second local speaker. From Japan, Ms. Tabata has expensive experience. She might be able to tell us about the accessibility of websites and

digital services in other parts of the world, as well. I would also want her to comment if she had a chance to look at the IGF website and how far it was accessible for a person with disabilities. Ms. Tabata?

MS. TABATA: Good morning, afternoon and evening. I am born with severe partial sightedness, and I worked with the Asia-Pacific region of the World European Union since 2004 and served two terms as regional president, until the term came to the full stop two years ago. Sorry, Chair, I might not have the latest issue on the other parts of the world, so let me focus on what we experience here in this country.

Before that, I would like to talk a little bit about the accessibility of this conference. First, like the lady from India talked, it was quite hard to register. The registration was not very accessible, and I think I spent about two hours completing. About one hour, and something that happened that was beyond my control and everything went gone, so I had to do everything again. It was a very challenging experience.

Another thing is the way finding of this venue. I came around with a sighted gentleman in the floor, and we had such a hard time finding this room. So the way finding needs to be sorted out better, or, like, having more persons assisting peoples to find out the right rooms.

Lastly, I was a little surprised to hear at the beginning of the session that only a very limited number of sessions have sign language interpretations. As I will mention, these days, the access to web is like the essence of our lives.   So the persons with hearing impairments, there should be more people who are interested in all the other issues on the Internet. I know it involves cost, like Mr. Chair mentioned, so maybe we cannot implement all the interpretation to everything, but there should be more expansion of the accessibility of the conference itself.

That's what I thought from this conference.

Going back to the blindness issues, I'm sure all the ICF experts have been talking about the accessibility features to support access to websites for blind and partially sighted persons, like being able to manipulate key boards, having alternative texts on the graphics, having names on buttons and links so we would know what will function once pressing that button. And having the flexibility in colors and contrast to support the users who have low vision.

I'm sure there are many people here who know better than me, so I just remind you that these are some of the features that will assist blind people.

I recently run into a statistics done by the Japanese government, showing that the high ratio of persons with vision impairment in Japan who use Internet, more than 90%. Although, it was up to 79 years old, so maybe over 80 years of age. I'm not sure the ratio, it could be lower. Nevertheless, there are so many people with disabilities, even for the persons with disabilities in general, the ratio was far above half. It's very part of the essence of daily lives.

For example, the Internet, access to Internet used to be having news on site, watching movies, watching TV, listening to music, exchanging communications, but these days, especially in Japan, partly because of the manpower shortage, our population is shrinking gradually, many face-to-face services are going on web these days. Like booking transportation, following the identity certification, that's been changing by this country over the past few decades. Then about the vaccination for the COVID-19. There are all these things that are so essential to your daily lives that really depend on the access to web.

If you don't have access to websites, for example, you can't book a transportation, you can't get vaccination, you can't have the identity certified properly. All these issues are so serious. So we think that -- I think that the web, access to web should be given more emphasis because of the essentialness in life. Whether you have a disability, whether you are aged, no matter how old or now young, if you want to get public services or private services, you definitely need access to web.

Another statistic shows that less than 10% of websites by private sectors are meeting the standards in Japan, Japan International Standards, which I think is probably a little less strict than WCIG. Nevertheless, still so little, so few of the websites created and developed by private sectors are meeting the accessibility standards. The reason is, of course, as some of the participants already mentioned, part may be the cost issues. Part may be the awareness issue. If you look around the Cyberspace, you'll see, oh, accessibility will reduce designing. Accessibility, nobody will benefit.

I really think we need to strengthen, work harder to raise awareness in the society. Then we also need to draw strategies to persuade to the government that web accessibility is part of your essential -- the essence of your life. It's so essential will your well-being, to ensure accessibility to websites for everyone.

I'm not sure I have the clear idea what I can do now, but I will definitely continue to tell people that access to websites is so essential for everyone. Thank you very much.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Yes, thank you very much for this, Ms. Tabata. This is very important. This is a lifetime, real experiences that you just shared with us, and I really appreciate that.

Before I move forward, Deirdre, do we have Muhammad Akram online?

DEIRDRE WILLIAMS: He was there, yes. He's here.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: He is here. Okay. We want Mr. Muhammad Akram to share his experiences with us.

Akram, could you, as our president of Asia-Pacific hard of hearing union, tell us how these services work, work for persons with hard of hearing in this region, and what would you have wanted to see in this conference?

DEIRDRE WILLIAMS: Muhammad Akram, you need to open your microphone.

Shabbir, could you remind him, please, to open his microphone?

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Please, Akram, please open your microphone.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: He might be using a sign language interpreter.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Oh, yes. Maybe his interpreter, could you remind Akram to open -- unmute himself?

DEIRDRE WILLIAMS: He said no.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: IS interpreter could interpret, yes.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Oh, okay. Our interpreter will interpret for you. Or, if you want, you could type it on the screen, and we could -- we could read it out.

Can you hear me? We cannot hear you if you are speaking.

Well, we want to -- maybe while we work on that, we can go to the next speaker. Oh, he's here now, great. We can see you. But we can't hear you yet.

Let's -- we'll move on to the next speaker, Peter.

Maybe Peter Crosbie can also talk about his experiences.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Peter, while we work with Akram, do you want to take mic?

PETER CROSBIE: Yes, I can do that.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Okay. Go ahead, please.

PETER CROSBIE: I'll leave my video off, if that's okay, because I have a very bad Internet where I am.   So just quickly, introduction, I'm Peter Crosbie.   I'm autistic. My input today will mainly be around cognitive disabilities, cognitive accessibility.

I actually -- it's wonderful to hear people's input, but I actually have to confess, I find it depressing and even disturbing. I first came to an IGF conference in 2018, when an autistic organization asked me to represent them, and it's just really -- well, unfortunate is not a strong enough word. Here we are, what is it, five years later now, we're still talking about exactly the same issues. Exactly the same issues.

For the most part, from what I can see in my sort of short history of exposure to the accessibility sort of movement and what groups like DCAD are trying to do, I just do not see that there is any meaningful progress. I do not see -- within the IGF or outside the IGF that the issues around accessibility are really being grasped. I don't see that beyond what I would think of as sort of band-aid solutions or add-ons, most of which are technological, that we're actually getting anywhere.

I constantly read surveys or interviews with people looking into this area and speaking to people like web developers, and it's really clear that they have no idea what accessibility is, except a sort of box they have to check that comes down from whoever is commissioning their work or their development or their designs.

I mean, there was a survey I came across recently, though it was from a while back, an organization did a survey of 37 websites that were government services websites in Europe, in different countries, and not a single one of them, not one of those 37 fully complied with WCAG guidelines. They were also guidelines version 2, not version 2.1, which are more up to date. From my perspective, I think there has to be a sort of moment of self-reflection here amongst all of us, as to what's going on and as to how accessibility is being presented, because it just seems that the message is just not getting through.

I mean, for example, I think in terms of the disability rights movements, one of the big mistakes we've made is to allow people who don't have disabilities to think that disability access or accessibility doesn't concern them. They think it's not an issue for them, but it is an issue for them, or it will be an issue for them. Every single person, at some point in their lives, will require accessibility support. I mean, even know, I'm a perfect example. I have a broken arm, and I cannot access the computer keyboard properly, or at all with my right hand, so I'm using speech-to-text for most of my text input. It's a simple example.

I know in terms of cognitive disabilities, I mean, one of the elements, key elements of what cognitive accessibility is ability is, for example, being overwhelmed by too much information. You know, every single person in this room at some point will have come across a website where they're being overwhelmed by too much information. But that's happening because that website is not following WCAG guidelines, whether or not you have a cognitive disability or not.

Recently, also, because of my arm, I was hospitalized. I was on medication. I had real trouble being able to access the Web or the Internet in the way I normally do.   There was a few days there I could not do it at all. Once again, that's because these measures are not being put in place.   Also, it's an example of how all of us are impacted by a lack of accessibility measures being put in place around the whole field of ICT. It's not just the Internet.

That's very briefly, I mean, I won't take too much time, my feelings in regards to this. Anyone else want to know more about cognitive accessibility or disability, maybe I'll put a couple of links in the chat for people to follow up in their own time, unless anyone has any specific questions. I think in going forward, to summarize or conclude for DCAD, for me, it has to be about education. We've got to somehow find a way of reaching people and educating them about what accessibility is, that it's not some boogeyman, but it is simply an essential part of ICT, essential part of web design. It's not something you add on as an afterthought, it has to be there from day one. It also has to be monitored continuously.

I mean, the survey I mentioned before, one of the points they made, sites are put up, they comply with WCIG guidelines, get ticked off on, and no one monitors them. Two, three years later, all of a sudden, you have a site where you have a lot of content that's inaccessible. So, anyway, there are my thoughts, and I'll pass back over to you.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Yes, thank you very much, Peter, for your thoughts. They're really important. The key message we take from your speech is that the accessibility has to be there right from the start. There has to be the processes that keep the accessibility sustained.

The question that you asked, I think we all should ask and we all need an answer to it, as well, that if the message is not getting across, what do we do? We have a message from Muhammad Akram from Pakistan.   I'd ask Judith to read the message for us.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Yes, thank you. I'm reading Muhammad Akram because it's in the chat. This is the president of Asia-Pacific hard of hearing foundation.   I'll focus on the online training programme accessibility. "For often, organizations depend on auto-

captioning. That is not accurate, especially for people from different accent and languages. It causes a lot of barriers, and they need human captioning until captioning becomes 100% accurate.

Another point is awareness. Even if captioning is available, speaker and trainer need to know that there are people with hearing disabilities, so when they refer to any image or diagram, give some pause so we can see the diagram. We cannot read captioning and look at a diagram at the same time.   As hearing people can listen and watch diagram at the same time.   This awareness should be part of online meeting and training management.

Besides, one important point is captioning, both human and auto, is available for far fewer languages. We need this in local languages, too. We are always working to promote human captioning for local languages, but it's a big challenge.   Thank you."

>> Yes, Akram, that is --

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Yes very much, Akram, for this very insightful message. I understand that there's a lot -- there's a short time, so I would move quickly with the agenda now.   I would ask Lidia Best to share her thoughts with us, because this is right after listening to the president of Asia-Pacific Hard of Hearing. We now listen to Lidia Best, who has been with the DCAD for so long. She knows IGF, and she also knows the accessibility services.

Lidia?

LIDIA BEST: Thank you very much, Muhammad. I am, today, wearing quite a few hats generally, so it is difficult.

But, today, I would like to say that I am part of a joint coordinating activity on accessibility and human factors from the international telecommunication union, as the vice chair, but also in Europe, I wear a hat of president of the European fed /TRAEUGS of hard of hearing people, and I work very closely with Akram. I would like to say, after what we have had today, I'd like to agree with every word we've heard.

One of the things is, we're talking about awareness and we're talking about those which don't really mean anything often, especially when laws are not followed with fines or implementation is not being checked, et cetera.   Akram touched on another thing, tick box exercise.   Because sometimes in these laws, we don't really do anything when it comes to the quality of access being provided. For example, broadcasters can decide, let's do auto-captioning for our broadcast news, and nobody cares if it is not 100% accessible or not, but we have put something there, so it's there. I think when it comes to the laws, when it

comes to the accessibility in general, there has to be that quality also being followed. It's quantity and quality, not just quantity itself.

And we have developed together, as Persons with Disabilities expert disabilities, as part of a global initiative on accessible ICT delegation, two technical standards, which are able to guide and to ensure those who are developing and working on the meetings, for example, like our remote meeting today, as well as, in general, accessible meetings, to understand what is needed, what needs to be before the meetings, during the meetings, and after the meetings, to make sure that they are fully accessible. And the standards provide good framework. It's not difficult to follow. It's a matter of (?) Allowed, as well.

What is also the standards includes human factors. Because you can have sometimes a person, you know, maybe doing something and say, okay, I will do the captioning, auto captioning, because we don't have the money. Fair enough. But then, someone needs to actually monitor what this auto captioning is producing, and then if that information is not correct, bring correction to it. Often, it doesn't happen. We are often left completely bewildered about what has been said, and we cannot participate fully if we don't understand fully the discussion.

There's one more thing. The pandemic has definitely been responsible for pushing accessibility forward in some innovation, but, again, it's often not quality checked. So from our perspective, it's making sure, as well, that when we discuss accessibility, innovation, we need to understand that both have a place. Sometimes we use auto captioning in personal meetings, which is enough, because between ourselves, between the groups, we understand how it works, so we know when to intervene and fill in those gaps. But when it comes to languages and human captioning, sign language is the same way, we need the human resource, as well, to be developed.

What we're seeing is many companies, organizations, including government, think that it's enough that we invest a lot of money in the innovation, so there is no need to invest in human-related services, to train human resources to support us. That is the danger here. Thank you. Give the floor to you.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Thank you very much, Lidia. We have a couple other speakers, as well, and one of them is Vivien from .nz. I'm grateful to Vivien, the CEO of the .nz, that on my invitation, she decided to be a part of this. In New Zealand, .nz is involved in accessibility projects, and I'm sure from today's discussion, you'd have a lot of food for thought when you go back and do some improvements on those projects. Vivien, do you

want to share something about your projects with us, with very brief time, three minutes, say?

VIVIEN MAIDABORN: Thank you, yes. A couple comments.

Thank you for the invitation, and great to be listening to the reminders about the importance of quality access.   .nz is a relatively small organization, but one of the things we're committed to doing is returning fans, from people buying a domain name back to the community. So I've just been in this job for a year, and I was concerned that those returning to the community included People with Disabilities, in terms of who was getting the funds. So I just really wanted to share some simple things we've done from, you know, the New Zealand domain name organization, to include our fund distribution to communities of people who have got particular access requirements.

Some of them are so obvious, it's almost embarrassing, that they have had an impact on who applies for funding. The first is on our web site in terms of criteria for funding, we have clearly identified that people with disabilities are a priority. There are other population groups also a priority, but we've clearly specified this group because of the potential for being excluded from participation.   The second thing we did was basically say, "You can apply any way that works for you."

If that's phoning up and having a conversation, we all will fill in the forms from there, or if you want to have a meeting and, you know, it's like you tell us what works for you, and we'll adapt. So that's been a really important part of making our fund application process accessible.

Finally, we've lifted up to groups who approach us to determine who you they measure the outcomes of their project.   So over the last year, we have had nine projects funded from the disability community, and they range from people funding their own content, telling their stories within their communities, to innovation around smart access, to research on the best ways for teaching people with disabilities how to be safe online, to human-generated transcripts for deaf-blind people.

And I'm so excited by the caliber of applications we've received and the diversity of work. I would just kind of finish by noting that I don't think Internet New Zealand is anywhere close to being great at access or including all people, and, you know, it's a commitment we've made and we'll continue to be on that journey, but I feel very proud of what we've achieved in this first year as our focus as a priority. Thank you.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Yes. Thank you very much, Vivien, for this brief intervention, but this is very useful. I really appreciate you coming to this session.

One of the underlying things that I would want to share with this session, through the other registries and registrars and the domain name industry, that you have a lot of potential to make a lot of good contribution in terms of accessibility, provided you do the right thing. One of those things can be following on the steps of .nz, knowing you have deficiencies is essential for improvement. I believe .nz knows that, so this is really great.

We have Yasunobu ishii from relay service, and I'd like your thoughts on this, as well.

YASUNOBU ISHII: Yes, I'm Yasunobu ishii from the accessibility relay service. I'd like to talk a little bit about our work now and also the suggestion. Let's skip some slides. I think you already know about their telephone service already, so I'll skip the explanation on this part, also.   Now, together with Professor Inoue, we surveyed and found more than 25 countries have legislative framework to support official telecommunication relay service. It was 2017, so I think the number is growing now. But my point is, more than -- not more than, most countries, almost all countries support only for conventional telephone communication. Not supporting the communication using Internet-based Web, like Zoom or Teams, WhatsApp, et cetera. So we are -- even though we are official organization, designated by the Minister of communication in Japan, we are not able to support the communication through such Internet-based apps. So I'd like to suggest to establish a framework, a legal framework, and funding mechanisms to sustain the continuous support of human support, such as sign language interpretation or other kind of help for the people who need to make their communication.

Thank you very much.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Thank you very much, Yasunobu.

Deirdre, do we have Grace online?

DEIRDRE WILLIAMS: I have not, but Andrea Saks, a former coordinator of DCAD, had said a little earlier that there were some comments that she would like to make.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Andrea, are you still online? If you are, please unmute yourself and go ahead.

DEIRDRE WILLIAMS: She may have trouble unmuting. She couldn't find the microphone.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Can someone from the technical team send her a request?

>> She dropped off.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: She dropped off?

>> Yeah.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Deirdre, I'm moving on with the agenda, but please let us know if she comes back online. We will pass the proceeding and, of course, she is one of the respected members of the DCAD. She would be given a chance. Whenever she is online, feel free to interrupt us and let us know that Andrea is online, and we'll give her the floor. Moving on with the agenda, so we do have an active board. We listen to what Relay Service does and what .nz is doing. This may be the time to move forward with the report on dynamic coalition on accessibility and disability, DCAD. Before I give the floor to Judith, my co-coordinator, for the activity report, I would request the audience to think about the future activities that DCAD can undertake. Because next, the question for you will be, what should be the future activities of the DCAD?

Judith, over to you.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Thanks so much.

This year was basically a rebuilding year, and we worked under a small team organized by Lidia Best to create some new governance documents for the DCAD. So we looked at several different -- we looked at several different other DCs that have been very successful, and we figured out, after a long discussion, what would be our new governance documents. Then we published those so they can be found on the website. We also wanted to make sure we had a code of conduct, because, sometimes, what happens is, there's sometimes disruptive people or people who are not respectful of others and wanted to make sure that DCAD is a place that is respecting everyone's contribution. So we worked to create a Code of Conduct, which has always been a touchy subject for dynamic coalitions, because we want to have, and are welcome and open to everyone and, therefore, as an UN, as a dynamic coalition coalition of the IGF, part of the UN, we want to make sure that we don't not include people. So we work with the main coordinating group to create a Code of Conduct based on that, so we've done that.

Several other activities we're looking at, how we can move forward in the future, whether should we be working with committees? Do we want -- if someone suggests an activity for us, we will then work to create a committee possibility to look into that activity, whether it's being a programme activity or research activity. Another one of our activities is the reinvigoration of the fellowship programme, which was mentioned earlier. We are so glad

to have gotten this fellowship off the ground. This is our first year, and we learned so much by doing our fellowship this year, so we can apply it for next year and make it even better, and work to really help some of the people to really -- the idea behind the fellowship is to have People with Disabilities be able to really attend the conference, whether they need to have an assistant, an aide with them, or whether not. We want to make sure it is inclusive and they really can get the most out of the conference. That is what guided us on our goals here.

And as we want to hear from now, we're doing a -- we'll put this on the web, but as we're down to the last ten minutes, we want to make sure we leave time here, also from you, to hear about what are your future activities. What do you want DCAD to do in the future?

Also, I want to mention that all the suggestions that you have about how to improve the IGF, we will put in in our guide to future ones, and that we will work also with new, other people. We work closely with Selene Ball, who is the new -- part of the new permanent staff to the IGF Secretariat, and she's been really helpful and instrumental in getting -- helping us and getting requirements. It was her help that actually brought in the interpreter for the main session. She wants to make it, but she's new to the field and doesn't really know. I think this is really helpful, that we have someone who is committed to doing it. And working for us.

We want to hear from people, what other future activities you want to do. What kind of programmes do you want DCAD to have? Please do let us know, and we can pass the mic around. If there is anyone in the room who wants to raise their hand, please do let us know.

If there is anyone online, Deirdre, let us know. Masahito?

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Masahito, please go ahead.

MASAHITO KAWAMORI: Thank you. I'm at ITU international telecommunication union, and I've been working with the disability organizations as well as Persons with Disabilities organizations for many years so far. I think I've been working with Lidia, as well, and all the DCAD management people.

Anyway, so I would like to suggest that there are several things that we find important for this group to work on.   One of the things is that I think DCAD standards should be implemented and also tested or certified or something like that.

I think DCAD with work with ITU to promote that kind of guideline or some kind of recommendation on how to do it. That's one thing. And especially on the use of what we

call a page reader or text reader for the visually impaired people, that's absolutely necessary, as Ms. Tabata said. It's not something just nice to have, but it is already something we must have, so we have to do it.

Another thing is, very important point that has been raised by Mr. Ishii, about how to integrate the telecommunication networks with the web and Internet.   Especially, I think that's one of the things that has been proposed in the United States by the United States Government, how to accommodate, for example, identifiers with telephone numbers. That's -- I mean, especially for telephone numbers, that's where ITU comes in. That will be a very good collaboration point, how to work on integrating accessibilities in the telephone network, as well as the Web and the Internet platforms.

I would suggest that these two or three things to be on the agenda of the future work programme of DCAD, so that -- and also a collaboration with ITU. Thank you. That's my point.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Thank you, Masahito. Thanks. That's a really good suggestion. I would address this to my closing remarks.

Any other suggestions?

DEIRDRE WILLIAMS: Dr. Shabbir?

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Yes?

DEIRDRE WILLIAMS: Muhammad Akram had another comment to make. May I read it?

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Please go ahead, Deirdre.

DEIRDRE WILLIAMS: "One thing that needs work is helping countries in making mandatory web and apps accessibility policies with quality. At the same time, need to empower organization of persons with disabilities in this topic so that they can push and monitor implementation of such policies."

I would like to add my plus one to that comment.

Thank you.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Yes. This is really a great suggestion.

Any other comments from here in the hall or online?

Oh, Gunela, please go ahead.

GUNELA ASTBRINK: Thank you very much. I'm from the Internet society Accessibility Standing Group. I'm delighted to be here. I have been involved with DCAD for a number of years. I'm absolutely delighted to be taking the role of mentoring the travel support fellows. It's really wonderful to be interacting with you. Vidhya and Nicodemus and Lidia, we've just met for the first time face-to-face after knowing each other online for a long time.

So in regard to my role, in the standing group, we are working hard on training in disability leadership, in internet governance and digital rights, and we have developed a syllabus for a training course to be developed online. There's also been a face-to-face workshop for south Asian participants. And I can see there can be a great link between DCAD and the accessibility standing group when it comes to training and mentoring in disability leadership. I look forward to further discussions about that. Thank you.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Thank you very much, Gunela. These are comments I'd respond to in my closing remarks. Before I come back to the hall, Deirdre, do we have Andrea Saks online or any other comments?

DEIRDRE WILLIAMS: I don't think Andrea has come back. I keep going to look for her, and she just isn't there. No other comments.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: No other comments, okay.

Any other comments from the hall before I go to my closing remarks?

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: We do.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Introduce yourself and have your say.

NURA: My name is Nura, and I'm from Japan. I'm working for a person with disability for many years, and I participated in 2005. After that, I stopped, but I came back here. I heard that someone said that the activities improve IGF in terms of accessibility, right? Then maybe the same thing happened at the time. They're still what we need to do.

Do you have any strategies to improve IGF?

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Yeah, thank you so much for your comments. Yes, we do. We are working. One of the problems we've encountered with the -- like, we had the comments about the website, is the UN hires a contractor to do it. They tell the contractor, "We want X, Y and Z on standards," and the contractor says they have it but they don't test it.

Just like people talk about, an enforcement ability, there is no one enforcing it. Maybe what we could do is insist on, have you hired a testing firm? Who is the testing firm?   Because when we had this issue, they said they have this. What we are going to do in the future is work closely with the IGF support association who has been helping funding the human captioning and others, and that they should not fund it if they're going to fund for website improvements. They need a results-based programme saying, okay, where's the evidence that you've done this?

Let me then -- that's one of the things that we'll do, but we could follow up afterwards. I want to give the last two minutes to my colleague, Shabbir, Dr. Shabbir, to close out the session.

NURA: Okay. Sorry. But I was really expecting, what you are doing from now on.

MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Thank you very much. I will address to it. Thank you very much, everyone, for being with us.   Deirdre and Judith for your moderation. And, of course, the captioning services, the sign language interpreters, thank you very much. Most of all, my panelists and speakers who, for whoever took the mic, I can't name you individually, but you know who you are. Thank you very much for coming here, participating in this discussion.

A couple of points that are really important, and that's why I declined to take individual names. One, we do need to coordinate with other organizations, and I really appreciate Gunela from accessibility of the Internet society, with the proposal we could collaborate. Of course, we do want to collaborate. How and under what conditions, we can discuss.

Same is the case with the Relay Service and the suggestion that Masahito gave and Akram gave with regards to the collaboration on forcing or motivating governments to enact first policies and to sort of give the organizations of Persons with Disabilities empowerment to -- and build their capacity to work on accessibility-related issues.

On the same wavelength, I would also want to extend this offer to .nz and other related registries and registrars, not just in the region but in other regions, as well, that if you want to come and collaborate with the DCAD, we would definitely welcome your inputs. We would also be glad to offer our expertise and support where we can. Just let us know what you actually require.

Lastly, I think this strategy is very important, and

I do hear when Peter and our lady friend from Japan said, that we are discussing the same issues. There is no progress.   That's one way of looking at it. But I see things a little bit

positively. My lens is a little bit different. I do share the skepticism that you people have, but, on the other hand, ten years back or even seven years back, when I attended my first IGF back in 2017, we did not have the realtime text captioning for all the sessions. Only there were certain sessions for this realtime captioning being provided. Same is the case for the sign language interpretation and the physical accessibility of the buildings and IGF sessions.

Today, we see a lot of improvement on that side. So if I say that I am not totally disappointed with the system, I do share the disappointments, but I'm totally not disappointed with the system. That's why I keep working with the system to improve it. I keep raising my voice wherever I can to improve the system. That is where we all come in, the dynamic coalition on accessibility and disability come in.

The main purpose of the DCAD is to ensure that IGF system is accessible. We also want to work with and analyse our initiatives on internet governance. On that, we want to -- the NRIs to come with us to work wherever they need our assistance, our support. We work with APRIGF to make it accessible, but that is partly because of most of our persons, of our team was in the Asia-Pacific region. That's why we could work with them.

While having strategy is important, having this ambition is important, that we want to work with NRIs, we would also want the People with Disabilities in different regions to come forward themselves. Because if we demand nothing about us, without us, that should -- that is ipso facto implemented on us, as well. If we demand it, we have to come forward and work with these initiatives. Without us, of course, nothing should happen.

But, at the same time, we should also come forward to work with these initiatives. Because if we get disappointed and leave the discussions by saying that nothing is happening, no one and nothing is getting improved, and we left the halls and we left the discussions, the implement of the, we are living with people who are not experts, including in all languages.

For one, I don't want to leave anything, any decision about my accessibility of the Internet in anyone's hand who is not expert on accessibility. That's why I keep working and that's why I expect from the member.